

*Editorial - Oct*OIA-89/78
19 October 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: OCR Admin

SUBJECT : OIA Response to Director of Personnel Memorandum
Regarding Possible Change in Vacancy Notice System

1. The proposal that mandatory Agency-wide vacancy notices be issued for all vacancies poses a dilemma. On one side of the issue there are employees within career services who see as their career development moving into vacancies within the career service when they represent increased opportunities and responsibilities. On the other side stands the right of all Agency employees to be permitted to apply for positions for which they might be qualified. Above both sides rests the Agency's interests--filling a vacancy with a well-qualified person as soon as possible. OIA believes that the interests of all are served by the present practice of seeking qualified candidates from within the Agency, starting at the local level. As becomes necessary, the field of search can broaden to interoffice, directorate, Agency-wide, and--finally--outside recruitment. This practice--in our opinion--is formalized and well-publicized and does provide those who might feel that their opportunities are being stifled within their career service with an opportunity for lateral and vertical movement.

2. OIA believes that even if all vacancies were written up and routed throughout the Agency, there would not be that much more movement of personnel. The reason is that most Agency components require distinct qualifications and experience levels (for example; engineers in DDS&T/OD&E, political analysts in ORPA, people with on-site experience in foreign countries in the DDO). We do not believe there are that many positions which are not specialized, nor people available with qualifications or experience levels in a variety of disciplines that would warrant one of the proposed approaches. It is imperative that the Agency get the best qualified people. If an action were taken to downplay the need to get the best, it could in the long-run adversely affect the overall competency of the Agency. Consequently, we recommend no changes in the existing vacancy notice system.

3. These are our responses to the questions posed on page 3 of Mr. Janney's memorandum:

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- a. OIA believes any of the options cited would have a negative impact on career development and upward mobility. It would become very difficult to develop meaningful and lasting career development tracks for people, and could thwart an organization's attempts at upward mobility. We think it could also lead to a morale problem, in that "open-season" for any and all vacancies might provide very little assurance to an individual in identifying where he might expect to progress. It could also tend to slow the process of filling vacancies. It would take time for an organization or a manager to review a number of files for each vacancy-time which would be wasted if a qualified and available person within the organization already existed.
- b. If assignments develop from a competitive selection system rather than a career service system, we see short-term disadvantages to those entering into new career fields insofar as promotions are concerned. Established careerists would have longer track records; they would be known quantities and would get promotions when all other factors are equal.
- c. No. If an individual chooses to enter a particular field at a particular grade level, he or she should be required to compete with those who share that field and grade.
- d. Career Service screening of applications from outside of the career service would necessarily be more extensive than it would be for those who are in service and whose potential has been previously established. This would pose an additional workload since career management functions in other areas would have to continue much as they currently exist.
- e. Selections would have to be closely monitored in order to document and adequately justify selections. Consistent in-house selections would pose problems. And there would be consistent in-house selections since the experience factor would weigh heavily in the selection process, as it well should. The purpose of a revised system as we see it is to convey to all employees that opportunities for advancement are not restricted by a system of filling vacancies in a "smoke-filled room". The de facto selection of a preponderance of in-house candidates on the basis of their being the best qualified would do little to change such skepticism.

STATINTL

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